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Why Johnny Can't Lead by PETER NAVARRO

With the savings and loan crisis of the 1980s and the much more recent corporate scandals at MBA-laden companies, business schools have been scratching their heads about how, exactly, to fortify their ethics curricula. And with the information technology revolution radically revamping management practices, the top-ranked schools have likewise struggled with whether to require IT in the core. Then there's the question of how to strike a better balance between the traditional number-crunching management science courses like accounting, finance, and operations management and the often-neglected soft skills like leadership and negotiations, which can make or break executives in the real world.

So, how well are business schools doing in reconfiguring their curricula? In a survey of the core curricula of the top 50 U.S. business schools, my colleague Darlene Carver and I found that only 40% require an ethics or social responsibility course while only 50% require IT. Moreover, less than a third require soft-skill courses like human resource management, leadership, negotiations, and entrepreneurship while only a little over half require organizational behavior or management communications.

One likely culprit for this slow progress is the antiquated organizational architecture of the typical business school. As Nobel economist Herbert Simon warned almost 50 years ago, there is a natural tendency for business schools to organize around functional silos such as accounting, finance, or marketing. These silos then engage in a perennial contest to build coalitions and protect turf. The result appears to be, at many schools, an unbalanced core curriculum that doesn't fully meet corporate or social needs.

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